

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 251 984

EA 017 401

AUTHOR Flood, Dudley E.
TITLE A Growing Trend toward Exclusive Education.
PUB DATE Oct 83
NOTE 11p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Practices; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Education; Minority Group Children; Minority Group Influences; Minority Group Teachers; *Multicultural Education; Public Schools; *School Desegregation; School Personnel

IDENTIFIERS *North Carolina

ABSTRACT

The first step toward realizing the goal of equal opportunity is that of establishing equal status relationships. North Carolina's progress in desegregation of public schools is evidenced in examining the historical problem areas of equal access to resources, the normative structure of schools, and staffing and board membership. The present trend in the state is toward providing a comprehensive course of study for all children. Because of cross-cultural experiences, a broadening of normative structures has occurred in schools. Among the 142 superintendents in the state, three are black, one is Indian, and two are female. In addition, minority race members on local boards are common. Addressing the unfinished agenda of second generation desegregation requires ensuring that all children have equal access, not just to educational opportunity, but to knowledge. Some indicators that desegregation is not complete are that school staff patterns still tend to reflect the vestiges of segregation, minority students are much more likely to be cited for misbehavior at school than are white students, and less recognition is given in the curriculum of the contributions of blacks, Indians, and other minorities. (MLF)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED251984

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

✓ No changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Dudley E. Flood

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

A GROWING TREND TOWARD EXCLUSIVE EDUCATION

BY

Dudley E. Flood
Associate State Superintendent
North Carolina Department
of
Public Instruction

October 1983

EA 017 401

A GROWING TREND TOWARD EXCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Dudley E. Flood

Associate State Superintendent
Department of Public Instruction

Having been closely identified with North Carolina's early effort to desegregate its public schools, I frequently am asked, "has desegregation worked?" This presentation will address at least a part of the answer to that question.

Before one can determine whether a plan or program has worked or failed, he or she must declare the goal toward which progress is to be measured. By my definition, desegregation is a vehicle designed to assure that every member of society will have equal access to the higher status positions in that society.

In a free society, status is acquired through one's achievements in and contributions to that society, and each of its members is assured an equal opportunity to achieve and contribute. This nation has long since recognized that the best way to equip its citizens to achieve and contribute is through a system of effective, free, public education made equally available to all its citizens.

The first step toward realizing the goal of

equal opportunity is that of establishing equal status relationships. If a society affords some of its members greater status from birth based upon membership in a given race, in so doing, it creates a discrepancy in the amount one must achieve and contribute in order to rise to the desirable status positions in that society. Hence, the only way to reconcile the starting point toward achievement is through the formation of equal status relationships. This, I believe, can be accomplished through the interaction which occurs when people live and work in a multi-racial, multi-cultural setting.

North Carolina is generally regarded around the country as being the state in which the desegregation of public schools has been the most successful and the most thorough. Such a statement leads to the reasonable question, "Successful against what criteria?" In an attempt to answer a part of that question, I have selected several areas which have been particularly problematic nationwide including in North Carolina. I hope that my analysis of our progress in these areas will be received as one perspective on that issue.

HISTORICAL PROBLEM AREA: EQUAL ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Prior to desegregation of the schools of

North Carolina, the flow of financial resources favored White school children. In the early years of desegregated schools, programs which historically were attractive to Whites tended to be more solidly funded, largely from State and Local resources, while programs which historically were attractive to Black and Indian children tended to be funded with Federal and foundation resources. Federal resources tended not to generate the sense of permanency nor the thrust for accountable results which usually accompanied State or Local funding. Hence, many well conceived programs did not fully achieve their potential.

The present trend in North Carolina is clearly toward providing a comprehensive course of study with appropriate experiences for all children with no regard for race and little regard for the source of funding. In that respect, desegregation is at work.

HISTORICAL PROBLEM AREA: NORMATIVE STRUCTURE OF SCHOOLS

During the first few years of school desegregation, as children of various cultures were brought together for the first time in the public schools, the patterns of behavior which were rewarded in school were those more characteristic

of children from the "traditional" household; one having two parents, two siblings, a clear defined authority structure, economic security, etc. This was understandable since it was this child for whom "schooling" had been devised and nurtured through the years. However, the student who was faced with learning to adjust to the newer norms was placed at some disadvantage initially.

Over the past several years, because of cross-cultural experiences, the normative structure of schools has tended to broaden to be more inclusive in nature. Simultaneously, students of all races and cultures have tended to gravitate toward the revised norm. The result has been a major improvement in race relations. In that respect, desegregation is at work.

HISTORICAL PROBLEM AREA: STAFFING AND BOARD MEMBERSHIP

In North-Carolina, staffing patterns historically have been characterized by a disproportionate inclusion of White males in the higher status positions in education. These positions included, in order of status, superintendent, senior high principal, junior high principal and elementary principal.

Less than ten years ago, North Carolina had

152 school districts, each of which had as its superintendent a White male. A report issued about ten years ago by a reputable professional organization indicated that only ten Blacks occupied the senior high principalship. While I can neither validate nor refute this allegation, the fact is that there were very few Blacks, Indians or women holding those positions. Further, Blacks on local boards were in short supply.

Today, there are 142 school districts in North Carolina. Of this number, three districts have superintendents who are Black, one who is Indian and two who are female. Minority race members on local boards are common. In this respect desegregation is working.

It is not the intent of this presenter to infer that the work of desegregating our schools is complete. On the contrary, this society must now prepare to address the unfinished agenda of second generation desegregation. For most of us, this task will be more difficult than was that of dismantling the dual school system, because the goals for doing so are less clear and the national mood is less supportive of human rights than was the case in the 60's and early 70's. Still, it is

a goal which must be attained if this nation is to maintain its position as a world leader.

The pressing issue of school desegregation in its early stages was that of providing equal access to educational opportunity for all students. This process consisted mainly of the removal of legal barriers which denied certain groups equal access to schooling. The unfinished business of school desegregation is that of providing equal access to success in this society for all its members. Having education does not provide a guarantee of success, nor should it, but it does greatly improve the likelihood of one's success. Therefore, the burden and challenge which schools now face is that of insuring that all children have equal access to knowledge which leads to success in our society.

Among the unsolved issues in the desegregated schools is the question, "what will be taught to whom?" There still exists a danger that minority students might either gravitate toward or be channeled into less challenging course work which tend to prepare them to occupy only the lower status positions in life. The probability is enhanced by the trained incapacity of some students to picture themselves as achieving persons and of some educa-

tors to expect and require academic progress and achievement from minority students. In this way, the vestiges of segregation tend to be self perpetuating by forcing avoidance learning and promoting ambivalence, reluctance and apprehensions of minority children to participate in the free society as equal members.

Staff patterns in school still tend to reflect the vestiges of segregation. Several school systems in North Carolina employ no Black professional personnel. In an even greater number of systems, all the decision-making positions within the central administration are occupied by Whites. Such staffing patterns tend to reinforce the myth that Blacks are incapable of functioning in decision-making roles. The concomitant effect is that Blacks cannot realistically aspire to occupy those positions and feel it a waste of their energy to prepare themselves academically to hold these positions. Therefore, the absence of "qualified Blacks" is also self-perpetuating.

Although the concern over discipline problems in North Carolina's public schools appears to have decreased in recent years, minority students are still much more likely to be cited for misbehavior at school than are White students. This fact may

be due, in part, to the fact that the behavior patterns that are rewarded in school are those behaviors more indigenous to White culture, thereby giving an additional educational advantage to children who were nurtured within that culture.

Some improvement has occurred in the areas of curriculum development in recent years, but there is still evidence of under-inclusion of the contributions of Blacks, Indians and other minorities. Such under-inclusion strengthens the myth that these groups have made no meaningful contributions to this society.

As education moves forward toward the completion of the unfinished business of desegregation, educators must examine the illusions of improvement. We must re-dedicate and re-sensitize ourselves to work to avoid tracking schemes, lack of balance in curricula, lower expectations of minority students to achieve and other such practices which have a negative impact on student progress.

Schools must foster an atmosphere in which no child is socialized to achieve at a level less than his or her ability. Since schools are the only institution which accommodates children

from all segments of our society, they must provide the practice field upon which Americans can learn and implement equal status relationships.